FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 20, 2017

Contact: Jim Nagle
Public Information Officer
505-629-4707

RTD 'BLUE BUSES' DESIGNATED AS 'SAFE PLACES' TO HELP VICTIMIZED YOUTH:

Launch Coincides with National Safe Place Week

Starting today, the North Central Regional Transit District (NCRTD), RTD "Blue Buses," will provide northern New Mexico victimized youth with a fleet of safe places to help connect them to life-changing resources through its participation in the national "Safe Place" program and in partnership with Taos-based DreamTree Project.

The designation coincides with the start of National Safe Place (NSP) Week which will be celebrated March 19 to 25, 2017. NSP Week is held annually to shine a spotlight on Safe Place, an outreach prevention program for young people who are in need of immediate help and safety.

NCRTD is working with DreamTree Project and the Safe Place program to transport youth escaping from dangerous situations to the nearest stop where they can be met by a Dreamtree representative who can help connect them with professional help.

"The Safe Place program has been helping protect runaways and at-risk youth since 1983 when it began as an outreach program for a local YMCA Shelter House," noted NCRTD Executive Director, Anthony Mortillaro. "We are especially pleased to be working with Taos-based DreamTree Project in this endeavor to support communities throughout our District and assist our most vulnerable teens by providing access to safety, shelter and stability in times of need."

All RTD buses will have a Safe Place sign prominently displayed on the exterior of the vehicle. Minors who see the decal will know that the RTD can help get them to safety. Once a minor notifies a driver that he or she needs help, the driver will alert the RTD dispatch center, which in turn will initiate steps to transport the minor to a Dreamtree/Safe Place representative.

-more-

NCRTD Safe Place/
3.20.17

According to DreamTree Outreach Coordinator, Irene Loy, "We at DreamTree Project are thrilled to be partnering with NCRTD on the National Safe Place program. Nationally, there are precedents for transit systems collaborating with Safe Place agencies, including the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) and Valley Metro in Phoenix. NCRTD is currently the only transit partner with the National Safe Place program in the state of New Mexico. Given that many youth who are seeking safety in rural northern New Mexico do not have reliable transit options, this service will provide vital transportation for youth in crisis in the north central area to Taos. We would especially like to thank Stacey McGuire (the Transit Planning, Projects, and Grants Manager), the Board, and Drivers at NCRTD for the essential role they have played in making this program possible."

The DreamTree Project is guided by empathy and integrity to provide a respectful, safe and structured environment to support youth in crisis. DreamTree's mission is to provide youth in need with a residential environment to practice life skills, understand family dynamics and prepare to become independent, involved members of their community. The group operates an Emergency Youth Shelter for ages 12 to 17 in which they receive case management, education, therapy, medical care, and life skills training. It also provides a Transitional Living Program, serving runaway and homeless youth and young adults ages 16 to 24, including young people fleeing domestic violence.

The North Central Regional Transit District provides fare-free and premium fare-based bus service to a service area that encompasses over 10,000 square miles of north central New Mexico including the counties of Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe and Taos; the Cities of Santa Fe and Española and the Towns of Taos and Edgewood; as well as the Pueblos of Pojoaque, Ohkay Owingeh, Nambé, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara and Tesuque. The company's signature "RTD Blue Buses" provide additional transit connections to New Mexico Rail Runner, Santa Fe Trails, RTD Chile Line in Taos, New Mexico Park and Ride, Los Alamos Atomic City Transit and Red River Miner's Transit.

/30/